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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, September

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SAUCES THICKENED AND UNTHICKENED." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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The cook's secrets that produce good sauces and good seasoning are in reality very simple. Yet the making of excellent sauces and gravies often seems to the uninitiated to be a very special art, peculiar to French chefs and very experienced housekeepers.

Sauces of all kinds provide variety and may be an economy, the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture points out in this week's "Market Basket." So it pays for every homemaker to acquire skill in making them. The cheaper ones may be used to extend the flavor of more expensive foods. Sauces may dress up the plainer foods or make them seem different when they must be served over and over. Many times the sauce is the means of giving character to the dish.

"For any course in the meal," the Market Basket continues, "there may be occasion for a sauce of some kind, and the kinds differ in a hundred ways. One difference, fundamental from the standpoint of the cook, is thickening. There are, so to speak, three families of sauces -- those thickened with starch in some form, those thickened with eggs, and those not thickened at all. In each family there are many variations. And there are some sauces that seem to belong to no family at all.

"Take the white sauces and their variations -- the most numerous group. Their basis is fat, liquid, and starch in some form. Using butter as the fat, milk as the liquid, and flour for thickening, we get the typical white sauce used for 'cream' soups, 'creamed' chipped beef, 'creamed' eggs and 'creamed' vegetables, such as new potatoes, cabbage, carrots, turnips, or onions.

"Except for soups, the usual proportions for combining are two cups of meat or vegetable to one cup of sauce. For starchy foods such as potatoes, rice or macaroni, we make the sauce thin -- that is, about 1 tablespoon of fat and 1 tablespoon of flour to 1 cup of milk. For a medium sauce, to use with succulent vegetables, we make a medium sauce -- $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 tablespoons of fat and 2 of flour to 1 cup of milk. For a thick sauce, use 3 tablespoons of fat and 3 or 4 tablespoons of flour to 1 cup of milk."

There you have what might be called a pattern for sauces. If you draw a little diagram you can see the differences at a glance. And I might add a warning or two at this point: Don't let your enthusiasm for making white sauce lead you to serve it too often! People get the sauce habit and forget that natural flavors of good foods are appreciated, too. On fresh peas, beans, either snaps or limas, okra, spinach, kale, or any of the greens, many people think melted butter, bacon fat or other meat drippings, with salt,

pepper, and in some cases lemon juice or vinegar, are seasoning enough. Another point: Don't serve two kinds of sauces at one time on one plate. For example, a meat gravy and a vegetable in a white sauce. For flavor and moisture, one sauce is enough.

It's one thing to have a recipe and another to know what to do with it. "The method of mixing a sauce is important," says the Market Basket. "Add the salt to the flour. Melt the fat over low heat, blend it thoroughly with the flour, then add the liquid. Heat the mixture and stir constantly until thickened so the sauce will be smooth. Cook until the flour loses its raw taste.

"White sauce for vegetables may be varied by using the vegetable liquid in place of some of the milk, or by adding something for flavor -- grated cheese, for example, to make cheese sauce for cauliflower or macaroni. Tomato sauce, for meat, or rice, or spaghetti, is made by using the tomato juice as the liquid. 'Brown sauce' is made with beef stock, and by browning the butter and flour.

"Gravy is made with meat drippings as the fat. The liquid may be milk, water, or meat stock. The proportion of flour varies with the consistency desired. Sweet-sour or 'Harvard' sauce, for beets, is made with vinegar for the liquid, cornstarch for thickening, butter, sugar, and salt.

"The sweet sauces of this family are made by using water for the liquid, butter for the fat, and cornstarch for the thickening, plus sugar and fruit juice or other flavoring. The cornstarch thickening gives gives a clearer sauce than flour gives, but must cook longer to lose the raw flavor of the starch. Therefore fruit juice should not be added until just before the sauce is taken off the stove. Otherwise the flavor of the fruit is spoiled and the acid may thin the sauce."

Among the sauces thickened with eggs, the Market Basket mentions Hollandaise sauce often served on cauliflower or broccoli and Bearnaise sauce for various vegetables. These are fairly expensive and complicated to make, but I'll be glad to give you directions if you ask for them. Custard sauce is merely a soft custard made a little thinner than usual, and I am sure most of you know how to make it.

But I do want to tell you what the Bureau's specialists say about sirups and other sweet sauces which you may be wanting to serve with fruit puddings like peach or grape tapioca, steamed apple pudding and all the good hot winter desserts. Just think of these pudding sauces, the Market Basket says, as "sugar sirups flavored in some way -- with maple, chocolate, wine, brandy, or fruit juices. Sometimes they are thickened with flour or with cornstarch, with egg, or with both egg and starch. The simplest lemon sauce is sugar sirup with lemon juice and butter. Hot chocolate sauce is a sirup flavored with melted unsweetened chocolate and vanilla, and enriched with butter. Foamy sauces are made with eggs, butter and sugar, a very little liquid, and flavoring." Would you like a recipe?

"The ingredients of foamy sauce are 1/4 cup of butter, 1/2 cup of granulated sugar, 2 tablespoons boiling water, 2 eggs, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, a bit of salt. Combine the butter, sugar, salt, and boiling water, and add to the well-beaten egg-yolks. Cook over hot water and stir constantly until thickened. Fold into this the well-beaten egg whites and the vanilla and lemon juice and serve at once."

